

REMARKS

By the present amendment, claims 13, 15-19, 23-25, 27-29, 31, 36-40, 43 and 45-46 have been amended. Claims 12 and 30 have been canceled. Claims 1-11 were previously canceled.

Claims 13-29 and 31-46 are currently pending in the application. Reconsideration and allowance of all of the claims is respectfully requested in view of the following remarks.

In regard to Objection to Claims 14, 16, 19-22 and 42

The Examiner has objected to claims 14, 16, 19-22 and 42 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but has indicated that they would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

In response to the Examiner's remarks, the Applicants have amended claims 13, 15-19, 23-25, 27, 28 and 43.

By the present amendment, claim 16 has been rewritten in independent form, including all of the limitations of claim 12 from which it previously depended.

In consequence of the amendment to claim 16, claim 12 has been canceled, and claims 13, 15, 17, 19, 23-25, 27, 28 and 43 have been amended to depend from claim 16 (directly or indirectly, as the case may be).

As a result of these amendments, the Examiner is requested to withdraw his objection to claim 16 and claims 14, 19-22 and 42 depending therefrom.

In regard to Objection to Claims 29 and 41

The Examiner has objected to claims 29 and 41 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but has indicated that they would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

In response to the Examiner's remarks, the Applicants have rewritten claim 29 in independent form, including all of the features of claim 12 from which it previously depended.

As a result of this amendment, the Examiner is requested to withdraw his objection to claim 29 and claim 41 depending therefrom.

In regard to Objection to Claims 34, 40, 44 and 45

The Examiner has objected to claims 34, 40, 44 and 45 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but has indicated that they would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

In response to the Examiner's remarks, the Applicants have rewritten claims 40 and 45 in independent form, including all of the features of claim 30 from which they previously depended and all intervening claims.

In consequence, claims 31, 36-39 and 46 have been amended to depend from claim 40.

As a result of these amendments, the Examiner is requested to withdraw his objection to claims 40 and 45, and to claims 34 and 44 depending from claim 40.

In regard to Rejection of Claims 30, 31, 36 and 39 Under 35 USC § 102(b)

The Examiner has rejected claims 30, 31, 36 and 39 under 35 USC § 102(b) as being anticipated by Daikoku, Japanese Patent Document No. JP 10-220213 (hereinafter "Daikoku"). The Applicants believe this rejection has been addressed and overcome by the present amendment.

As a result of the present amendment, claim 30 has been canceled, and as such the Examiner's rejection is moot with respect thereto.

As a result of the present amendment, claims 31, 36 and 39 are believed to be allowable in view of their dependency from claim 40 as amended, which the Examiner has indicated is directed to allowable subject matter.

As such, the Examiner is requested to withdraw his rejection of claims 31, 36 and 39.

In regard to Rejection of Claims 12, 13, 15, 17, 18, 23-28, 30-33, 35-39, 43 and 46 Under 35 USC § 103(a)

The Examiner has rejected claims 12, 13, 15, 23-28, 30, 31, 36, 39, 43 and 46 under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kato, U.S. Patent No. 6,053,785, in view of Hartke, U.S. Patent No. 6,477,992. The Applicants believe this rejection has been addressed and overcome by the present amendment.

The Examiner has additionally rejected claims 17, 18, 32, 33, 35, 37 and 38 under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kato in view of Hartke, and further in view of Abe, U.S. Patent No. 4,766,860. The Applicants believe this rejection has been addressed and overcome by the present amendment.

As a result of the present amendment, claims 12 and 30 have been canceled, and the Examiner's rejection is moot with respect thereto.

As a result of the present amendment, claims 13, 15, 17, 23-28 and 43 have been amended to depend from claim 16, which the Examiner has indicated is directed to allowable subject matter.

As a result of the present amendment, claims 31, 36-39 and 46 have been amended to depend from claim 40, which the Examiner has indicated is directed to allowable subject matter.

As such, the Examiner is requested to withdraw his rejection of claims 13, 15, 17, 18, 23-28 and 43 depending from 16 and claims 31-33, 35-39, 43 and 46 depending from claim 40.

Miscellaneous Amendment

By the present amendment, claims 16-18, 29, 40 and 45 have been amended for consistency with the rest of the claims and/or to correct grammatical errors. No change in claim scope is intended or should be inferred.

In view of the above remarks, the Applicants respectfully submit that all of the currently pending claims are allowable and that the entire application is in condition for allowance.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further is desirable to place the application in a better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

At the time of filing of the present response, no fees were believed to be necessary. In case any fee should be necessary, the Office is hereby authorized to debit Deposit Account number 502977.

Respectfully submitted,

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